



Edition Three – March 2020

Welcome to the Slopefield Sunflower, the newsletter from Slopefield Allotment Association.

Site Security

As you may be aware unfortunately we have had some intruders on the site. Our community hut was broken into along with a number of sheds and some items were stolen. Whilst the isolated nature of Slopefield can work to our advantage at the same time it also means that there are no neighbouring houses or passing members of the public to act as a deterrent against intruders. If you notice any suspicious behaviour in or around the site then please contact Police Scotland immediately on 101 and let a member of the Committee know.

Remember not to store valuable equipment or materials on your plot as the Association's Public Liability Insurance does not cover loss or damage to equipment, materials or structures anywhere on the site. Please also ensure that the entrance gate is closed and locked every time you enter and exit the site. Whilst the gate may not stop the most determined of intruder it helps stop unauthorised access by vehicles preventing issues such as flytipping.

Reminder - Annual General Meeting, Thursday 5 March 2020

The Slopefield Allotment Association Annual General meeting will be held at Airyhall Primary School on Thursday 5 March 2020 between 7pm and 9pm. Please come along and meet fellow plotters and help shape the future of the site with your ideas and suggestions.

Stop Press: Free Flower and Vegetable Seeds on offer to those attending!

Dates for the Diary – Community Days 2020

Sunday 29th March 2pm – 4pm

Sunday 26th April 2pm – 4pm

Sunday 31st May 2pm – 4pm

Wednesday 17th June 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Sunday 26th July 2pm – 4pm

Thursday 20th August 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Saturday 19th September 2pm – 4pm

Sunday 25th October 1.30pm – 3.30pm

Sunday 8th November 12 Noon (Bonfire – to be confirmed)

Please come along, meet fellow plotters and help keep Slopefield looking great. (oh and there is tea and cake after!).

Growing Season 2020

The new growing season is nearly upon us. Here are some facilities at Slopefield to help you get the best out of your plot!

Community Greenhouse (next to plot 86) and Community Polytunnel (next to Hutton Hut)

The community greenhouse and community polytunnel (first third of polytunnel) are available for plotters to use to start seedlings or grow on crops. Please ensure that any seedtrays and pots are labeled with your plot number. Plotters are responsible for the watering and maintenance of their on plants. Any plants found to be affected by pests or disease will be removed immediately to prevent cross infection.



Community Tool Shed

The community tool shed next to the community plot is full of useful tools (not just spades and rakes!) available for both old and new plotters to use. Please ensure that any tool(s) you use are returned each day in a clean condition and that the tool shed is kept tidy to allow ease of access for others.

Swap Area

The swap/spares area is located in the bottom car park as you come on to the site. If you have any spare plants, seeds or equipment in good condition that you no longer require place them in the swap/spares area for fellow plotters. Please label all plants so we know what we are planting! Any loose or perishable items (pots, seed packets, etc. - not plants!) should be placed in the storage box. **If you have left something in the swap/spares area and it is still there after two weeks then please remove and dispose of at the local recycling centre.**

Slopefield Suggestion - Garden Focused Website www.gardenfocused.co.uk

Suggested by one of our fellow plotters the garden focused website allows you to set your location (Aberdeen of course!) then when you click on a particular vegetable from the menu it will give you the optimum seed sowing date for your location, whether that be in the greenhouse, under a cloche or straight into the ground. The garden focused website also has some great tips and advice on fruit, herbs and other gardening techniques.

If you have any great gardening tips you would like to see featured in the Slopefield Sunflower please contact us via slopefieldallotments@gmail.com

Please Remember.....

Parking: Please park end on to maximize spaces and do not block the roadways with vehicles.

Watering: Hosepipes - max ten minutes use. Please refill the Water Butts if they are empty.

Grass Verges: Do not dump waste from your plot (especially stones) on the grass verges.

Paths: If you have a path between your plot you (and your plot neighbours) must maintain it.

Composting: Do not compost cooked food. It attracts rats!

Water Supply

The communal water supply will not be turned on again until sometime during the third week in April. This is at the instruction of Aberdeen City Council.

Woodchip/Scaffold Boards

We're always on the lookout for free woodchip or scaffold boards. If you know of anyone who could supply these please e-mail us or speak to a committee member.

New Notice Board

Following feedback a new notice board has been installed in the bottom car park adjacent to the swap area. Slopefield Allotment Association Committee Minutes will be displayed on this notice board along with other useful information. If you would like to suggest any other improvements for the site please let us know. Remember though this is not funded by Aberdeen City Council and we rely on the generosity of others to allow us to make these changes. Fundraising ideas welcomed!



Terry's Tips

If you didn't do it during the Winter you need to prepare your soil asap! This means removing all the annual and perennial weeds and digging in to a spades depth garden compost or well rotted manure. If you don't have a supply of either you can purchase 6X fertiliser or chicken manure pellets. Remember some vegetables e.g. carrots don't like to be grown in ground that was immediately manured. Before sowing in a dug bed ensure that the soil is raked over many times to get a fine tilth and remove any large clods. If you prefer the no dig method then spread your compost a few inches thick on top of your beds. Whichever way it is better to feed the soil rather than feed the plant!

If you haven't already done so cut down the canes of your Autumn fruiting raspberries right to the ground. Other fruit bushes such as Blackcurrants, Blueberries and Gooseberries should also be pruned if required before they start back into growth. Cut out all diseased, crossing and damaged branches to maintain an open shape.

You can get a head start with sowing by covering your beds with clear plastic sheeting or black membrane to warm the soil. You can also use cloches, clear tunnel plastic cloches are ideal as they also protect the plants after they have germinated. If you want to use individual cloches you can recycle plastic bottles by cutting off the bottom. Two litre bottles or larger are ideal as they give the plants room to grow. It is best to leave the top off a bottle cloche and insert a short cane through the nozzle into the ground to save it blowing away. The ideal soil temperature for germination begins at 6 degrees however some seeds may require a higher soil temperature to germinate. When the weeds start germinating then you will know it is an ideal time to sow.

Buy your potato tubers before all the best quality varieties are gone. Avoid shrivelled and mouldy tubers making sure you pick healthy ones about the size of an egg. With early varieties it is best to chit (sprout) your tubers on a cool windowsill so they grow shoots up to 2-3cm long. This gives them a head start when planting. Place the tubers with the "eyes" facing upwards in module or egg trays. If you are chitting in a greenhouse or shed then keep some thick fleece handy to cover the Tubers when frost is forecast. Maincrop varieties can be chitted but it is not necessary as they have a longer growing season. Once the tubers have sprouted you can either leave all the sprouts for smaller potatoes or just leave two or three rubbing off the others for larger tatties.

Broad beans, peas, onion sets and shallots can be started off in module trays on a cool windowsill, greenhouse, coldframe or polytunnel and then planted in their final growing position once warmer. You can also sow leek seed sparingly in deep pots and then transplant the seedlings once they are pencil thick. Hardy annual flower seeds can also be sown in a seed bed on the plot and transplanted to their final growing area once larger. If you would like specific gardening advice then you are welcome to contact Terry direct via e-mail on terry.stott@btinternet.com

Feedback/Suggestions/Volunteers

If you have any feedback or suggestions for the newsletter or are interested in volunteering at Slopefield to help maintain our site in the beautiful condition that it is then please e-mail or speak to one of the committee members or row reps on site. Details can be found on our website here: <https://www.slopefieldallotments.org/info>

Best wishes
Slopefield Allotment Association